



new era creative space



IMPACT REPORT 2023

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A Message from the **Executive Director**

A Message from the Executive Director,

Looking back on 2023, I'm grateful for our strides together. Throughout the year, we achieved remarkable milestones that embody the spirit of NECS. From captivating performances to groundbreaking partnerships, each accomplishment reflected our shared commitment to empowerment and creativity.

The recognition of our student film **'We Are Democracy'** at the Peekskill Film Festival showcased our dedication to amplifying youth voices and sparking meaningful conversations. The launch of our student-led podcast, **'My Activist Life,'** inspired dialogue on justice within and beyond our community.

We were honored to receive the prestigious **WNYC Lehrer Prize** for our dedication to children's social and emotional well-being. This award is a testament to the transformative impact of our holistic approach to education.

Our 10th-anniversary celebration at the Paramount Hudson Valley Theatre was a powerful reminder of our collective journey. The overwhelming support from parents, students, community partners, NY State Senator Harckham, and Peekskill's Mayor McKenzie reaffirmed the profound impact of our work and shared vision for the future.

Your support has been invaluable, and as we grow and consolidate in 2024, we hope you will continue this journey with us. We are optimistic and determined to continue inspiring creativity, fostering empathy, and empowering young minds.

Thank you for being an essential part of the NECS family and vision. Here's to another year of **inspiration, creativity,** and a **brighter future for our children and community!**

With warm regards,



Ridvan Idara
Executive Director

Milestones & Memories

NECS Celebrates 10 Years

On September 10, 2023, we gathered at Peekskill's Paramount Hudson Valley Theatre to celebrate a decade of NECS's meaningful journey. Alums, parents, students, community partners, friends, and supporters came together for a heartfelt event, connecting in a way we had not been able to since 2020. It was a joyful occasion that showcased an art exhibition featuring student work, musical performances, poetry readings, skits, and a call to action for ongoing support of NECS in our community.



**THEN
& NOW
VIDEO**



Program Highlights

A FOCUS ON CORE VALUES

We *strive* to align with our core values of

creativity

empathy

nobility

joy

justice

service



Our programs aim to cultivate the curiosity and ingenuity to imagine a better world.



NECS Student film 'We Are Democracy' was featured at the Peekskill Film Festival

We were thrilled that a short film created by NECS film students was selected to participate in the prestigious 5th annual Peekskill Film Festival. This recognition not only celebrates the talent and dedication of our students but also reaffirms NECS's commitment to nurturing creativity and empowering young filmmakers. It was here that NECS students asked, through film...

HOW DO WE MAKE SPACE FOR PEOPLE TO BE THEMSELVES?

HOW DO WE AMPLIFY YOUTH VOICES?

WHAT EVEN IS DEMOCRACY?

WE ARE DEMOCRACY VIDEO



Open Book Spoken Word

Our monthly Open Book Spoken Word Poetry event at the Hudson Valley MOCA for teens and young adults served as a vibrant platform where creativity intertwined with community building. As participants took the stage to share verses, a powerful connection was forged, united by a shared passion for self-expression.



We strive to develop an intimate care for other human beings and an appreciation for the natural world.



Summer Cultural Immersion Trips

Cultural immersion travel has been part of NECS summer programming since 2022. We expose our students to various cultures and stories, aiming to nurture empathy for people different from themselves while they serve the community they visit.

Civil Rights Journey to Alabama

During a service-learning trip to Montgomery, Selma, Birmingham, and Tuskegee, participants explored the Civil Rights Movement, connecting with local historians and activists to learn more about our nation’s history. Organized with three other youth service organizations—Westchester Youth Alliance, Hitchcock Presbyterian, and Kol Ami Congregation—this trip united youth from Westchester with peers from Alabama’s More than a Horse Farm program. This experience provided insights into marginalized communities’ struggles and triumphs, and the youth collaborated on creating a documentary film of their journey.

CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNEY TO ALABAMA VIDEO

“The memorial walk showed not only the people who died and their names, but also those who were forgotten and didn’t have a name.” -Ruben Gray, student

“Meeting these amazing girls from Pine Ridge had such a huge impact on me, seeing how strong they are and how they could go through all of life’s struggles and yet they still had a positive attitude and remained the amazing people they are.”

-Ella Morel, student

Learning About Indigenous History in South Dakota

NECS partnered with the Oceti Wakan Mission to take seven teenage girls to Pine Ridge. In our schools, Native American history and the challenges faced by indigenous peoples are often overlooked. Our girls immersed themselves in the Lakota people’s history, culture, and traditions during their five-day stay. They connected with their native peers, gaining insights into reservation life and the land’s history.





Recognizing the inherent nobility in every individual, including ourselves, we provide opportunities for individuals to shine and embrace their full potential.



Professional Development

At the start of each season, our teaching artists and administrative team came together for transformative professional development workshops. We focused on fostering a nurturing, equitable, and imaginative space for our students. Central to our discussions was the importance of acknowledging the inherent dignity of every individual and infusing every interaction with compassion, all while upholding a sense of structure in the classroom.



We delved deep into our core values, exploring ways to seamlessly integrate them into our lesson plans, enriching the educational experience. Through this collaborative effort, we strengthened our bonds as a team and laid the foundation for a more cohesive and supportive community within our organization.

Peekskill Open Studios

Student Exhibit

The Peekskill Open Studios is an annual event held during the first weekend of June, where local artists showcase their work. Hundreds of people visit Peekskill annually to meet artists, buy art, and learn about the art scene. NECS student artwork was showcased at the event, allowing community members to admire our students' creative endeavors. We want our students to see their work exhibited and feel proud of their artistic achievements.





To derive joy from intellectual and creative pursuits is one of the key aims of our programs.



Youth Theater Collaborative

Every year for four months, we put on a theatre production, introducing students to the joy and magic of theatre. This season, our students chose the musical comedy *Cyrano de Burger Shack*, a modern retelling of *Cyrano de Bergerac* by Edmond Rostand. We opened to four sold-out, laughter and music-filled performances at the Studio Theater in Exile at Hudson Valley MOCA.

“I truly appreciate the program’s inclusive, playful, and professional approach!” -Nancy Arocho-Mercado, parent



We welcomed over 30 eager students to our Nature Connection Camp in the summer. From invigorating hikes to refreshing swims, every moment was filled with joy and discovery as they explored the wonders of nature. Engaging in creative art projects allowed them to unleash their imaginations and share the happiness of self-expression. Tranquil yoga sessions provided moments of serenity, fostering peace within themselves and among their peers. Tending to gardens instilled a sense of responsibility and pride as they nurtured life around them. Mastering paddle boarding, kayaking, and sailing brought immense joy to the middle schoolers and taught valuable lessons in perseverance and teamwork, creating cherished memories of summer success.



To be equitable, accessible, and inclusive is a fundamental expression of our commitment to justice.

“This is a safe space for girls to be themselves and openly talk to their peers about issues that they may not be comfortable talking to a parent or a teacher about with no judgments. They also get to be involved in helping the community out through their service projects.”

–Martine Bass, parent



NECS extended scholarships to every child who requested support, ensuring all interested participants could access our programs.



My Activist Life Podcast

We launched a podcast in 2023. **“My Activist Life”** was initiated and hosted by NECS students Ariana Okoth and Helena Steger to serve as a platform for amplifying the voices and experiences of youth. Through candid conversations and insightful discussions, this podcast empowers young people to share their stories, advocate for Social Justice, and challenge systemic inequalities. The podcast’s first season, released in the summer of 2023, sheds light on pressing issues and provides a vital platform for youth voices.

Listeners can access **“My Activist Life”** on Spotify, Buzzsprout, and the NECS website.



Peekskill Police Department Empowers Girls

One of the highlights of the Girls Empowered program was a session led by Sargent Carter’s team from the Peekskill Police Department. The officers’ sensitive approach took into consideration the girls’ age and emotional well-being as they provided an informative presentation on human trafficking realities and injustices. This crucial session equipped teen girls with knowledge about signs, risks, and preventive measures, empowering them to protect themselves, and they learned how to advocate for their peers if they notice signs of abuse.



NECS expresses its commitment to humanity through community service.



Thanksgiving Service

Our youth joined Westchester Youth Alliance for their Thanksgiving Service Event. They assisted in preparing over 2000 holiday meals for 20 food pantries. Witnessing the passion and kindness of our youth in serving others, we emphasize the significance of instilling a sense of responsibility, molding them into future leaders who appreciate the importance of contributing to their community.



Community Day at Peekskill Regeneration Farm

Peekskill Regeneration Farm and New Era Creative Space united to present a Community Day centered on community service through nourishing people and the planet. Through this collaboration, we aimed to highlight the vital role of feeding the community while cultivating environmental stewardship. The event featured cooking demonstrations by Feeding Westchester, utilizing fresh garden produce, alongside engaging workshops on arts and crafts, seeding, and planting. Attendees enjoyed music, games, and a vibrant atmosphere, all in the spirit of fostering connections and spreading positivity.



Year In Review »

2023 by the Numbers



83

Programs offered in 2023



752

People participated in NECS programs



41

Teaching artists and educators trained



287

Individual, corporate, and foundation donors chose to support NECS



51K

Saved through volunteered time and talent

Growth & Expansion

In 2023, the New Era Creative Space team guided programs from inspiration to reality. Our team's dedication and innovative spirit inspire young hearts and minds, foster meaningful relationships, and cultivate a vibrant community network.

Alongside the highlighted programs, we offered numerous workshops and initiatives throughout the year, including a lighting workshop led by a professional filmmaker, healthy manhood training with **A Call to Men**, a monthly community yoga class open to all, and stress management workshops with the **Peekskill NAACP**. A local photographer, **Rana Faure**, joined our team to introduce still life and portrait photography to enthusiastic middle school students. These additional endeavors provided diverse learning experiences and support to our students and the community.

We also extended our support to afterschool programs, collaborating with school districts and institutions to serve more children. At **Peekskill City School District**, we provided afterschool arts programs at the middle and two elementary schools on Tuesdays through Fridays.

Additionally, we expanded our program at the **Peekskill Housing Authority Community Room at Dunbar Heights** three days a week, offering visual art and introducing yoga and mindfulness. We served a healthy meal provided by **Second Chance Food**, available to students and their families at the end of each session.

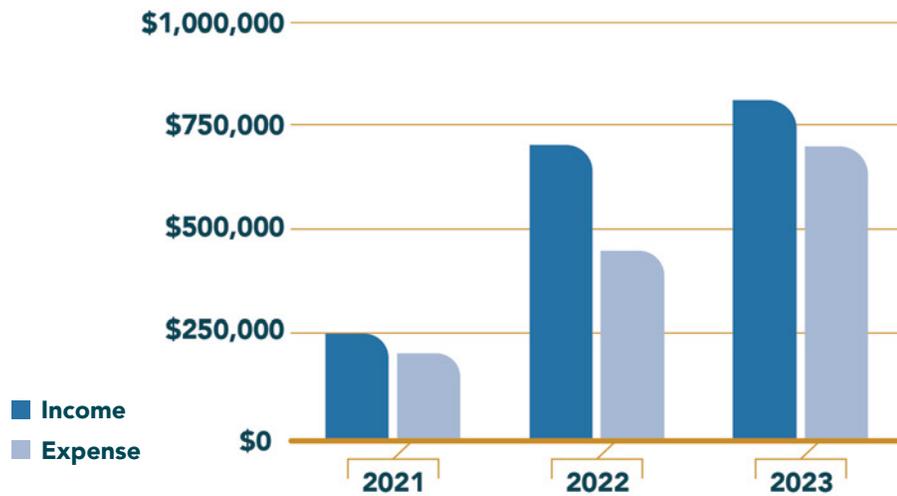
For the third year, we have continued our partnership with **The Children's Village's Jackson Rapid Intervention Center**, offering therapeutic theatre programs for children who have experienced trauma. This ongoing commitment reflects our dedication to providing support and opportunities for growth to all members of our community.



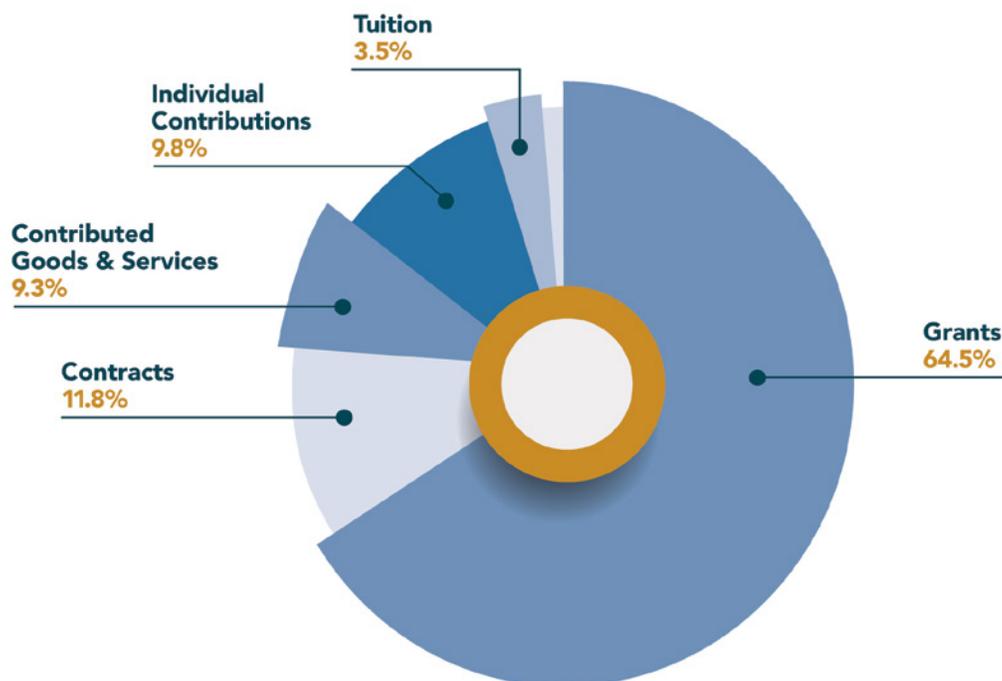
Financial Report

Thanks to community and foundation support, New Era Creative Space has been able to expand our impact over the past three years. We have developed strategic partnerships and brought our programming into the community. In addition to the support reflected here, those who work for and with NECS donated over \$51K in-kind.

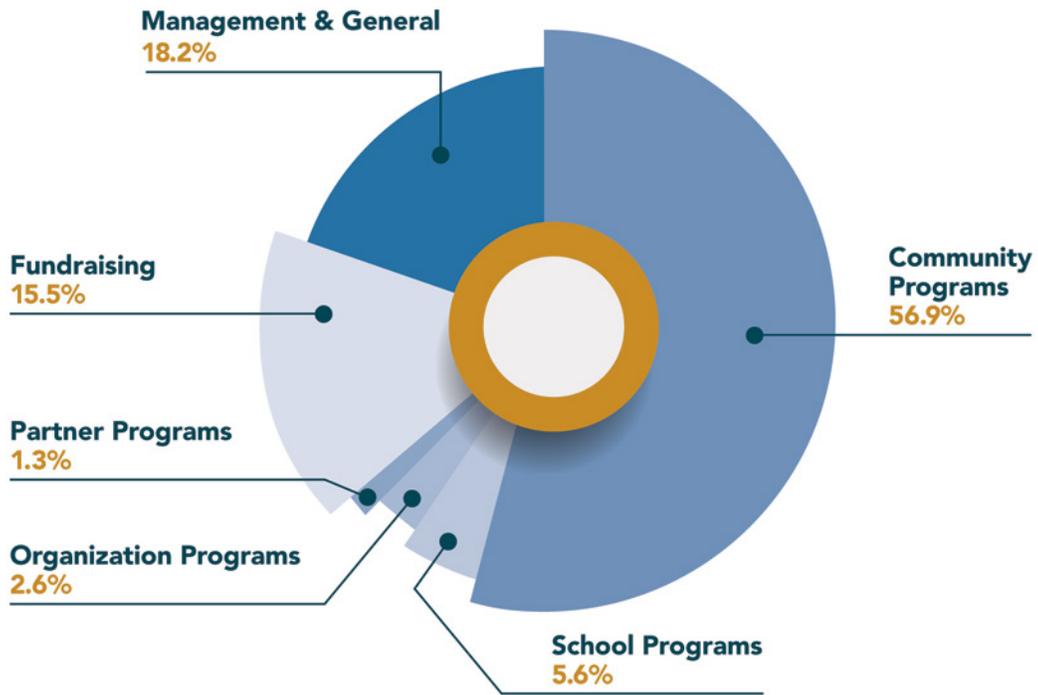
Growth: Income & Expense



Income Total: \$811,035



Expense Total: \$661,717



Recognition

The Lehrer Prize for Community Well-Being

We were honored to receive the prestigious 2023 WNYC Lehrer Prize during an interview on Brian Lehrer’s show alongside two other esteemed non-profit organizations. This recognition highlights the dedication and steadfast commitment of the entire NECS team to serving the children and adolescents within our community. The theme for this year’s award, focusing on individuals and organizations working towards the social and emotional well-being of local children, resonates deeply with our mission.



Partnerships & Alliances

NECS experienced diversification and expansion within our circle of supporters in 2023. We extend our deepest gratitude to our invaluable contributing partners, whose unwavering support has propelled us into a new and promising phase of our organizational evolution. Your generosity and dedication have been instrumental in our growth, and we are profoundly grateful for your pivotal role in our journey.

A CALL TO MEN
The Next Generation of Manhood

ARTSW
ARTSWESTCHESTER

M
mona Educate.
Empower.
Transform.

 **NoVo**
Foundation

SONY



Rotary 
Club of Peekskill

Wayfarer
FOUNDATION
STRIVING FOR UNITY

CREATE**ACTION**

WCF WESTCHESTER
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION
A DIVISION OF THE NEW YORK COMMUNITY TRUST

Car Val Investors Foundation
Cornelia T. Bailey Foundation
Hope For Youth Foundation
Hudson Gateway Realtor Foundation
Joseph Robert Foundation
JFM Foundation
Lanza Foundation
KidsGardening.org
Patrina Foundation
PCSB Community Foundation
Starbucks Foundation
Stephen Colbert American Dream Fund
The Hive Foundation
Westchester County Legislators
Westchester Women's Bar Association
Who's On First Fund

Community Partnerships

Throughout 2023, local institutions and organizations played essential roles in our growth and consolidation. Whether offering spaces for gatherings or engaging us to run programs, they significantly contributed to our progress. We're immensely thankful for their partnership and look forward to strengthening our bond.



Arts10566
Bean Runner
Be First Boxing Gym
Bethany Arts Community
Gleasons
Hitchcock Presbyterian Church
Hudson Valley H2O
Hudson Valley Chamber of Commerce
Inner Being Yoga
Kol Ami Congregation
Longhaul Farm

Peekskill Church of Assumption
Peekskill Coffee House
Peekskill Hispanic Community Corp
Peekskill Methodist Church
Peekskill NAACP
Peekskill Police Department
Peekskill Presbyterian Church
Peekskill Regeneration Farm
The Center at Mariandale
Studio Theatre in exile
Westchester Youth Alliance

Individual Supporters

In 2023, approximately 287 Individual, corporate, and foundation donors chose to generously support NECS, contributing their time, skills, and resources to our cause. Their invaluable assistance allowed us to achieve our mission and significantly impact the community.

Additionally, the collective effort of our dedicated volunteers helped us save an estimated 51K in volunteer time. NECS is profoundly grateful for our contributors and volunteers' unwavering support and commitment. Without their dedication and generosity, our work would not be possible. They are the heart and soul of our organization, and we are incredibly thankful for their continued partnership and belief in our mission.

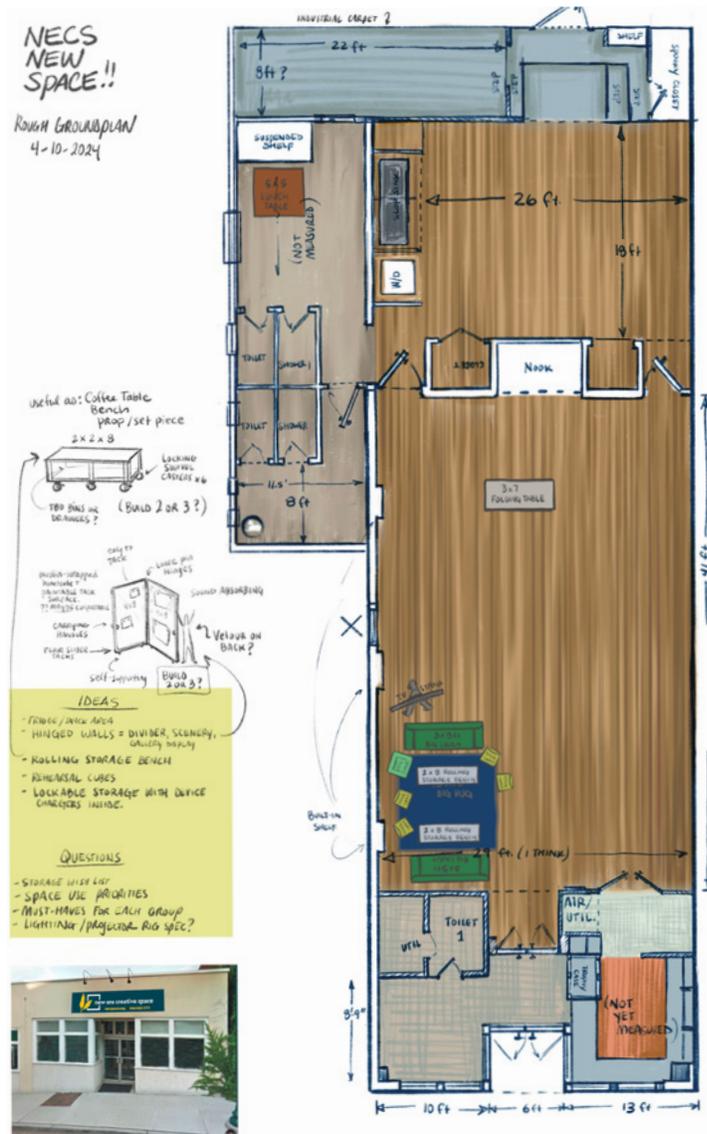
Looking to the Future »

NECS will transition into a new facility in Spring 2024. This move marks a significant milestone in our organizational journey. We can grow our programs and services with dedicated classrooms and office space, furthering our goals of fostering creativity, empowerment, and community engagement.

The new space will accommodate after-school classes and provide the flexibility to host workshops and events. We plan to expand our programs to include music production, music lessons, woodworking workshops, and more. This exciting development reflects our commitment to advancing our organizational capabilities and underscores our dedication to providing innovative educational experiences for all.

We look forward to the opportunities this new space will bring and its impact on the communities we serve.

As we embark on this exciting transition, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to our supporters and volunteers whose dedication has made this expansion possible. Your continued support has been instrumental in shaping the future of NECS. We invite you to join us through this new phase by contributing to our efforts to furnish and equip our new space. Your generosity will directly impact the lives of the students and communities we serve, ensuring they have access to the resources and opportunities they deserve. Together, let's make this new chapter of NECS a resounding success. Thank you for your unwavering support and belief in our mission.



“After every class, my child comes home excited for the next class. She’s learning so much being a part of this program.” -Charie Robinson, parent

THANK YOU

Executive Director

Ridvan Idara

Board of Directors

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Marla Ratner

Glenn Smith

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Promotion Director

Stella Filocco
Administrative Assistant

Karen D. Faulkner
People & Culture Manager

Bria Waterman
Artist in Residence

Dawn Norris
Digital Designer



The mission of New Era Creative Space
is to inspire stronger communities
through creative programs.

necspace.org